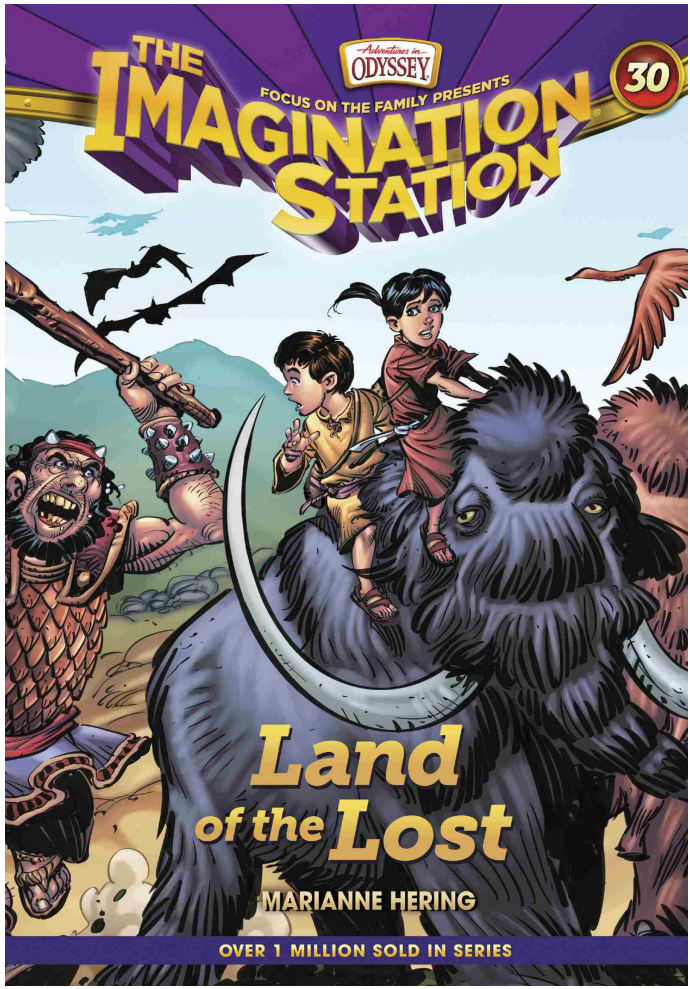
Adventures in ODYSSEY
FOCUS ON THE FAMILY PRESENTS
THE IMAGINATION STATION
30
Land of the Lost
MARIANNE HERING
OVER 1 MILLION SOLD IN SERIES

Land of the Lost

BOOK 30

MARIANNE HERING
ILLUSTRATIONS BY SERGIO CARIELLO

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Land of the Lost

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Secret Word Puzzle
About the Author

The Translation Device

Cousins Patrick and Beth burst through the basement door to Mr. Whittaker's workshop. This was where Mr. Whittaker, also known as Whit, worked on his mysterious projects.

The gray-haired inventor stood near a long metal table. It was covered with all sorts of boxes, gadgets, and tools. He was using tweezers to work on a small electronic device. Patrick thought the device looked about the same size and color as a pinto bean.

Beth sat down on a metal stool at the table. She peered over Whit's shoulder and watched carefully.

Patrick also watched, leaning his hands on the table. Several seconds went by. Then several minutes. Finally, he got tired of watching Whit twist tiny wires.

"Well, it's tomorrow," Patrick said.

Whit kept working. Beth kept watching him work.

Patrick cleared his throat. "It's *tomorrow*," he said, a little louder.

"No," Beth said, looking at the tiny device. "It's *today*."

Patrick sighed. "Yesterday Mr. Whittaker said we could go on an adventure 'tomorrow.' "

"Right, and that is *today*," Beth said. She looked up at Whit's face. "We don't really have to wait until tomorrow, do we?"

Whit smiled and set down the tweezers. His blue eyes twinkled. "Yesterday's tomorrow is tomorrow's yesterday," he said.

Patrick frowned. His head was starting to hurt. "That *is* today," he said slowly. "Do we really get to go *now*?"

Whit lifted his bean-sized project between his thumb and first finger. "Yes," he said. "You may go now. But first you'll each need a pair of these."

Patrick reached for the device, and Whit put it in his

palm. Whit handed another one to Beth.

"What is it?" Patrick asked.

"That is my new-and-improved translation earbud," Whit said. "It slips inside your ear."

"Won't it fall out?" Beth asked. "It's so small."

Whit shook his head. "It will expand or contract to fit your ear exactly. But it's too large to go all the way to your eardrum."

"Good," Beth said. "Patrick once got a piece of a crayon jammed in his ear."

"I was only three years old!" Patrick said. "At least I didn't put an eraser up my nose in kindergarten."

Beth blushed a rosy shade of pink. But she didn't say anything more about the crayon.

Patrick put one bud in his left ear. "Cool!" he said. He felt the bud turn soft and settle into his ear.

"Works better with two," Whit said. He handed one more earbud to each of the cousins.

Beth studied her earbuds. "They're kind of a pinkish tan. Looks like the same color as my skin."

"Exactly," Whit said. "I made them especially for you two. They will be nearly undetectable from a distance."

"Hmm," Beth said. "Is there a certain someone you don't want to detect these earbuds?"

Whit nodded, and his glasses slid down his nose. "Amelia Darling will probably follow you into your next adventure. And I don't want her to get a translation device."

Patrick remembered that Amelia was a scientist working for the government. She'd been able to use another version of the Imagination Station, the one that looked like an old Model T car. She was supposed to use the Imagination Station for government research, but she had broken the rules and built her own remote control for the machine. She had followed the cousins on their most recent adventure to Alaska Territory in 1925.

"I wonder what Amelia wants," Beth said. "But we know she's following us. We can handle her if she shows up."

"I'm counting on that," Whit said, pushing up his

glasses. “Be on the lookout. See if you can find the remote control she built.”

Patrick asked, “What do we do if we find it?”

“You’ll know the right thing to do,” Whit said.

Beth and Patrick nodded.

“May we go now?” Beth asked.

Whit waved his arm toward the Imagination Station.

Beth ran to the machine.

But Patrick stayed near the table. “I really liked talking to the animals in our last adventure,” Patrick said. “Will we need to talk to animals in this next adventure too?”

Whit laughed. “Oh, I think you’ll be satisfied with that part of this adventure,” he said.

The Jungle

Beth climbed in the Imagination Station and buckled in. Patrick slipped into the black leather seat next to her.

The inventor pushed some buttons on a control panel, and the door slid shut.

"Go ahead," Whit said. "Push the red button."

Beth pressed it with her palm.

The machine whirred. It shook and rattled. For a moment, Beth felt as if she were on a broken elevator that was falling. She heard a *clang* and *clunk*.

Suddenly, everything went dark.

The cousins climbed out of the machine, and it quickly disappeared. Beth looked at her clothes and then at Patrick's. They both wore tunics. The fabric's fibers were thick and loosely woven. Each cousin wore a leather bag. The bags' long straps crossed their torsos and hung from their shoulders.

"We're in some sort of lush jungle," Patrick said.

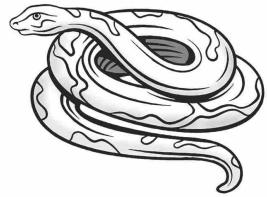
Beth looked around. Plants and trees were everywhere. She also saw many different kinds of animals. Birds flew overhead, squawking and tweeting. Through her earbuds, Beth could understand the birds were happy, saying things like, "Not far now!" and, "Flap one, flap two. Stay in sync."

An orange snake slithered across one of her sandals. Beth jumped backward and cried out, "Eek!"

"Excuse me," the snake hissed in her earbuds. Then it disappeared into the bushes.

A second orange snake followed. "Don't mind us," it said as it squiggled in S-shaped movements between Beth's

sandals.



Larger animals were grouped in pairs. Nearby stood tan creatures with white and black patches on their chests and heads. One had long, striped horns. They nibbled on green shoots of grass.

"Those look sort of like gazelles," Beth said. "But they're smaller than the ones at the Odyssey Zoo. And their muzzles are much, much longer." She took a step toward them with her hand raised. "I wonder if I can pet them."

Patrick reached out his arm to stop her from moving.

"Beth, watch out . . ." he said. His voice was soft and calm. "Check out the teeth on that cat by those big ferns."

Beth whispered, "It looks like a saber-toothed tiger!"

"Stay still," Patrick said. "We can't outrun it. And moving quickly triggers a cat's prey instinct."

The orange-and-brown cat strolled out from behind the fern. Its tail was held up in the shape of a question mark.

The big cat looked at the cousins and blinked its amber eyes.

First crouching and sniffing, it suddenly sprang toward Patrick.

Beth gasped. Fear instincts forced her to jump backward. She closed her eyes and held her breath, waiting to hear Patrick scream.

But the only sound Patrick made was a "Here, kitty. Nice kitty."

Beth opened her eyes.

The cat was rubbing its chin against Patrick's legs.

The cat purred. "I like how this boy-cub smells," the earbuds translated for Beth.

Beth's eyes widened as round as country-style biscuits. This cat had huge white fangs. Each tooth was nearly a foot long. But it seemed as tame as a kitten. In fact, it licked Patrick's toes, and he giggled.

The gazelle-like animals weren't frightened of the cousins either. The horned one looked up and made a series of wheezing noises and squeaks.

Beth heard the translation earbuds in her ears. "Hi, Panthero and Felina," the creature said to the fanged tigers. "I'm so glad your names were on the list."

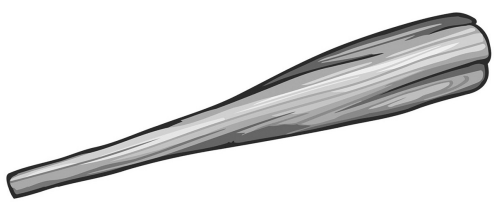
Names? Tame animals? Beth wondered. Then she remembered something from Sunday school: *Adam got the job of naming the first animals*.

She shook Patrick's arm and said, "I think we're in the Garden of Eden!"

The Giants

Patrick pointed to something in the distance. “This *might* be the Garden of Eden,” he said. “But that’s *not* the way I pictured Adam. Where are the fig leaves?”

A tall, burly man was stomping up a hill toward them holding a wooden club. His wrists were wrapped in a band of spikes too. A thick layer of leather armor covered his chest. It looked tough, as if it had been made from rhinoceros hide.



“He’s more muscular than a power weight lifter,” Beth said.

“He’s taller than a professional basketball player,” Patrick said.

Patrick felt the ground shaking. “He’s making the earth quake,” he said.

Beth said, “Look!” She pointed down the hill. “There’s a matching pair.” Her voice was filled with high-pitched fear.

Another giant with long hair in a ponytail raced after the first.

“You’re wrong,” Patrick said. “They don’t match. The second one is much larger.”

The ground trembled again as the two giants thundered up the hill.

Patrick stood as tall as he could. He linked arms with Beth and took a step forward. He hoped the translation device worked with giants. “Fee-fi-fo-fum,” Patrick said loudly. “Do you smell the blood of an Amer-i-can?”

Beth elbowed him in the side. “The rhyme is Eng-lish-man. And don’t put ideas in their heads. These are not giants from *Jack and the Beanstalk*,” she said. “Maybe they’re nice.”

The first giant roared. The sound hurt Patrick’s ears. It was like static from a television that had poor reception. The earbuds didn’t translate the noise.

The smaller giant swung his club wildly. Both giants shouted.

“I don’t think they’re nice,” Patrick said.

Patrick unlinked his arm from Beth’s. They turned to hide.

But their path was blocked by two snarling saber-toothed tigers.

Re-ow-ow! said Felina.

The tigers had leapt between the cousins and the giants.

Beth heard the nearest tiger growl again. “Run!” the earbuds translated. “We’ll slow these beasts down.”

“Thank you!” Beth said to the tiger. She pushed Patrick forward. “You heard the cat. Hurry!”

The cousins rushed down a path through the jungle.

Behind them came snarls and screams from the saber-toothed tigers. The giants’ shouts were full of rage.

The ground trembled again.

Beth didn’t dare look back. That might slow her down.

She shouted to Patrick, “They’re getting close! The shaking is stronger!”

Beth ran till she was gasping for breath. Her sandals had sticks and rocks in them. The objects hurt her feet, but she didn’t slow down.

Up ahead stood a massive gray rock nearly covered by the branches of a weeping willow tree.

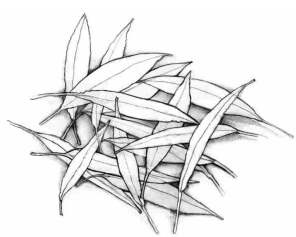
“Hide behind that,” Patrick said.

The cousins slipped behind the gray mass under the trees. Beth leaned against it, breathing in cool, fresh air that smelled like clovers.

She noticed the rock was not very firm. It had gray stringy stuff on it. Was it moss?

“I’ll check my bag. Maybe Mr. Whittaker left us something useful,” Patrick said. “Like five smooth stones and a slingshot.”

“I’ll look too,” Beth said. She reached inside her bag. Her fingers felt something smooth and flexible. She looked inside. “I’ve got some . . . fresh leaves?” Her voice was flat with disappointment.



“This won’t help either,” Patrick said. He held up a paintbrush. “I’ve got five of these.”

Just then the gray rock made some grumbling noises.

“Hang on,” Beth heard through the translation earbuds.

Beth looked around. The big “rock” was shifting, and a white pointed object was coming straight toward her.

The Woolly Mammoths

"It's an elephant!" Patrick shouted.

The gray rock was alive and turning toward them. The pointy white object was an elephant's curved tusk. Patrick thought it was at least ten feet long.

Beth grabbed hold of the tusk nearest to her. She climbed it as if it were on a jungle gym.

"Get on the other tusk," Beth shouted.

Patrick wrapped his arms and legs around the tusk. The huge beast then moved quickly away from the giant men.

Thud, thud, thud. Each of its steps made the earth shake.

The elephant crashed through the jungle.

Patrick bounced up and down with each step. He felt as if he were going to fall off the tusk. And, as the elephant moved through the trees, leaves slapped him in the face. Branches scratched his arms.

Patrick shimmied up the tusk. He grabbed hold of the elephant's ear. Next, he pulled himself up onto the back of the beast. He felt much better. The ride was less bumpy from on top. Fewer branches tried to knock him off.

"Help me up," called Beth. She stretched her arm

toward Patrick.

Patrick reached down and grabbed Beth's wrist. He pulled her up in front of him with one mighty tug.

Beth said thanks as she settled in on the animal's neck. The elephant moved back to more open trail.

"I don't think this is a regular elephant," Beth said. "It's more like a woolly mammoth. Feel its fur."

Patrick ran his hands along the side of the animal's neck. It was hairy. The fibers felt coarse and matted.

Patrick heard more thuds behind him. He turned around and looked. A second mammoth followed closely behind. It was reddish brown, the color of bricks.

Patrick squinted. The giants were still shouting at the saber-toothed tigers. The smaller giant waved his club wildly.

Patrick turned to face forward again. He patted the mammoth's neck. "Thank you for saving us," Patrick said. "Where are you taking us?"

"To the Safe Place," the mammoth said. "All of us are going. Aren't you a special pair too?"

Patrick looked at Beth. She shook her head.

"We're just visiting," Beth said. "But we would like to meet Noah."

"Noah!" Patrick said. "Of course! The pairs of animals are heading to the ark that Noah's family built! There's a male and a female of each kind!"

The mammoths climbed up a rounded hill. Each step they took shook the ground.

Beth looked at the top of the hill. She gasped in delight when she saw the ark. The word *ginormous* popped into her mind. The ark was taller and longer than she'd ever imagined it could be. It had a slightly angled roof. A large door at the bottom of the ark stood open. Inside the doorway was a big ramp for the animals to enter.

Many creatures walked, crawled, or hopped up the ramp. Birds of all colors flew and sat on the roof or the railing around the edge of the giant boat.

"*Re-ow-ow*," called an animal from below. Beth looked down. The pair of saber-toothed tigers was walking alongside the mammoths. The orange snakes that had crawled over Beth's foot slithered nearby. The gazelles she had seen earlier were up ahead. They entered the ark.

Beth said to Panthero, "Hello again to you too."

Panthero meow-roared again. "Big stinky men still follow," he said.

Patrick thanked Panthero.

The saber-cat purred. Beth felt the translation more than she heard it. Panthero seemed to be oozing happiness toward Patrick. "I think Panthero has bonded with you," Beth said.

Just then, the mammoths' steps slowed.

Beth looked down. Smaller animals were everywhere now, crowding around the mammoths. The large beasts placed their feet carefully. One mammoth sidestepped a fox that scurried between its legs.

At last, the mammoths came close to the great boat. Beth could see that it was made of wood with some sort of a glossy coating.

The reddish-colored mammoth ducked through the doorway. But Beth saw the brown one wouldn't fit with them on top.

Beth climbed down, holding on to the mammoth's ear and sliding along the curved tusk. It was like gliding down a staircase banister. Then she dropped five feet to the ground.

Patrick did the same and stood next to Beth. The saber-toothed tigers rubbed against Patrick's legs and purred.

Just then, the giants popped out from behind some bushes. They ran down the path straight toward the cousins.

Patrick saw that the taller giant wore a headband with animal horns on top. The giant snatched the club from the shorter one. "It's my turn to scare them, Anak," he said.

Anak reacted in a rage. He shouted, "Give it back, Erum! It's mine!" He tried to grab the club.

But Erum had longer arms. He held the club just out of Anak's reach and laughed.

"Finders keepers," Erum shouted. He swung the club at Anak.

Inside the ark, the mammoths trumpeted their anger.

"The hallway is too narrow," Beth said, translating. "The mammoths can't turn around to come out."

The thuds of the mammoths' tusks on the walls shook the ark.

Crack!

"They will crash through the ark's walls!" Beth said.

Patrick looked at Anak and Erum.

Anak shouted, "I had it last!"

Erum must have been tired of using words. He swung the club and hit Anak in the stomach.

The shorter giant doubled over. He gasped as if he were a balloon releasing air. Then he grabbed Erum's ponytail and yanked.

Erum shouted so loud the translations device got warm. Patrick felt the wax in his ears soften a little.

Beth whispered to Patrick, "They're like toddlers."

Finally, the reddish mammoth came out of the ark. A tall woman in a dark red tunic sat on the mammoth's back. The mammoth trumpeted and curled his trunk high in the air.

The woman's hair was the color of butter. It was coiled in a braided crown around her head. Her long arms were tanned and muscular. Patrick thought the woman was incredibly beautiful. She looked like a powerful queen.

"Boys!" the woman shouted.

The giants quit their squabbling.

"Ack," said Erum. "Now look what you did, Anak. Here's our sister to scold us—again."

"Not sister," the woman said. "We're cousins, twice removed." Her mouth curved downward in a tight frown. "Why have you come? You know you're not welcome here."

Anak wrinkled his nose and turned toward Patrick and Beth. He breathed in air like a dog sniffing after the rain. "We followed the children," the giant said. "They smell of

something unusual. They are not close kin of Noah. So, they are not your concern."

Patrick looked at Beth. "I knew it!" he said. "They *can* smell blood."

Beth nodded. She squared her shoulders and said proudly, "I am a daughter of Adam and Eve. And Patrick is also a child of Adam's line."

Erum sniffed again. He studied Patrick and then said, "The boy is like you, Amora. He has the hair of the people from the north. But his eyes are the color of sky in the morning." He raised the club. "I claim him—he is not your kin or the kin of anyone on the . . ." He raised the club and pointed to the long boat.

"This is an ark," Amora said. She peered down at Patrick and Beth. The saber-toothed tigers stood at their sides.

"Who are your fathers and grandfathers?" Amora asked. She didn't sound mean, but her tone wasn't really welcoming either. "Which of Adam's sons do you come from, Cain or Seth?"

Beth scratched her head. "It's all so confusing," she said. "We're not from around here. And, um . . . we didn't really keep track of all the 'begat' stuff."

Patrick thought about the lists of names in the Bible that Beth was talking about. He felt bad that he always skipped over those parts. The names seemed important now.

"What's going on here?" a voice said from behind them.

Everyone became quiet and turned toward the voice.

Patrick saw an old man standing in the ark's entryway. His white beard hung to his waist. He wore a cream-colored tunic with a rope belt. He held a shepherd's crook in his left hand.

A white dove left the railing at the top of the ark. It flapped its wings and landed on his shoulder.

Coo, it trilled.

The earbuds translated it as . . . "Coo." *Silly bird,* thought Patrick. *Not a real thought in its little head.*

The man and bird came down the ramp.

Patrick's jaw dropped in awe. He dropped to one knee.

"Noah," Beth said. She also knelt. "I've always wanted to meet you! I'm Beth. And this is my cousin, Patrick."

Noah

Noah motioned for the cousins to rise. Beth and Patrick stood.

Next Noah motioned to Erum to put down the club. He said, “This is a peaceful place. Drop your weapon.”

Erum shouted, “No!” But then he locked eyes with Noah. That seemed to calm the giant. He let go of the club. It landed with a thud.

Anak thumped his chest. He said to Erum, “Wimp. I’ll show you how it’s done!” He bent over and reached toward the club.

But the mammoth was faster. It snatched the club from the ground with its trunk. The animal held the club high like a trophy.

Amora patted the mammoth’s head. “Good girl, Gadola,” she said.

Gadola roared a trumpet-like sound and lifted her trunk even higher. Beth could see the mammoth’s mouth curve into what looked like a smile.

Noah raised his shepherd’s crook and thumped the end on the ground. He said to the giants, “Finish your business and then leave this place.”

“That is fine with us,” Erum said. “We’ll just take these two children.” He pointed at Beth with a long, knobby finger. “They are just the right size to squeeze inside our mines.” He leaned forward as if whispering a secret. “We’re looking for gold.”

Erum stepped toward the cousins. He was close enough that Beth could see his teeth. They were long and sharp and ugly, more like a dog's than a man's.

Beth moved backward, nearly tripping over Panthero.

Then Patrick stepped forward in a brave gesture. He shouted, "Don't you touch us!"

The saber-toothed pair moved forward again, growling low and raspy.

Re-ow-ow.

The reddish mammoth raised the club in its trunk.

The pair of orange snakes slithered toward Erum, raising their heads and hissing. Their white fangs glistened, and their eyes glared with menace.

Noah raised a hand, and the animals calmed. The snakes shut their mouths. The great cats mewed in submission. The mammoth lowered the club.

Erum backed away from the animals anyway. "I mean no offense," he said. "But you, Noah, have made it clear that only eight humans are allowed on the . . . ark. What difference does it make if these children die in the mines or in the so-called flood?"

Noah said, "Well, until the great rain comes—"

Anak burst into laughter, interrupting Noah. His stomach jiggled his leather armor. His belly bounced like an armadillo on a pogo stick. Anak said, "I can't believe you still think there's going to be a flood!"

Erum said, "My brother laughs because you've warned us about this great rain for almost a hundred years." Erum looked at the sky. "There isn't a cloud in sight. No one believes you."

Amora turned to Noah. "Noah, we can't let my faithless cousins take these children. The animals show them affection. Perhaps they can help."

Amora then jumped off Gadola's back, landing gracefully on the ramp. "The decision is yours, Noah," she added, before she and Gadola disappeared into the ark.

Beth gulped. She looked at Noah. The bird on his shoulder cooed and then pecked at his chin.

The old man was looking at the sky. He stroked his silky white beard.

Beth turned to look at the giants. She had to tilt her neck to see their expressions. They grinned at her, exposing their teeth. Their long incisors glinted in the sun. They smacked and licked their lips.

Erum even drooled. A large drop of saliva fell from his bottom lip. It splashed on the ground with a *plop*.

They're not going to put us to work in the gold mine, Beth thought. *They're going to eat us*.

Patrick felt Beth slip a hand into his. He could tell she was frightened of the giants. He was too. *What if Noah doesn't want to help us?* he wondered.

He glanced from the hungry-looking giants to the old man. Noah was fiddling with the strands of his long beard. His head was tilted as if he were studying the clouds. Could he be praying?

Just then a field mouse scampered across the ramp. One of the orange snakes slithered after it.

That gave Patrick an idea. He waited until Noah turned his face back toward them. Then he said, "It must be a lot of work taking care of all these animals."

The saber-cats *re-ow-ow*ed their agreement.

Patrick went on, "You'll need meat, insects, hay, and fish to feed them all. Beth and I could just help gather food until the rains come."

"Patrick will even help with removing the animals' poop," Beth said.

Patrick scowled. He squeezed Beth's hand *hard*.

Her cheeks flushed. Then she added, "I can help with that too."

Patrick relaxed his grip.

Noah looked at Patrick. The old man's eyes seemed to see right into his soul. "Do you believe God is going to send a great flood?" Noah asked.

"Of course," Patrick said. "Everyone has heard that

story!”

Now Beth squeezed his hand. He realized his mistake.

“I mean, everyone alive has heard you predict it,” he said. “Why else would you have built such a big boat?”

“Why indeed?” Noah said. He motioned with his crook to the cousins. “Come with me. You need to meet someone.”

Noah walked up the ramp to the ark. Patrick walked up the ramp with Beth beside him.

The saber-toothed cats hissed at the giants. Panthero raised a paw and swatted the air, his ears laid back flat. Patrick’s earbuds translated the hiss to “*nana-nana-na-nah*.”

Behind them the giants shouted and screamed in rage.

Amelia

Inside the ark, Beth stood in awe. The interior wood beams were beautiful. Staircases and ladders zigged and zagged between wide aisles. Shafts leading from each of the three decks had ropes and buckets connected to pulleys.

And there were no cages! Each animal pair had an open stall. *The animals are here because they want to be*, Beth thought.

This bottom deck held the larger animals that had already arrived.

She and Patrick followed Noah down the center aisle. They passed the mammoths. Gadola waved hello with the giant's club.

Rhinos, hippos, seals, polar bears, boars, gorillas, zebras, and more! The giraffes had a two-story stall. Their mouths chomped on leaves hanging from the deck above.

Beth thought the animals looked familiar, but not quite the same as modern creatures. The armadillos' backs were as large as metal garbage can lids. The zebras had longer noses than the ones Beth had seen at the zoo. The hippos' feet were more hoof-like. The boars' tusks curved and crossed in front of

their muzzles.

Each of the animals grunted, neighed, or snorted as Noah passed. Beth's earbuds translated, "Good day," from the seals. "Top of the morning," from the rhinos. And from the gorillas, "Hey, what's happening, Noah!"

Noah waved at them all. He put one foot on the first rung of a ladder.

Patrick whispered to Panthero. He told the saber-cats to go back and guard the ark's door. They growled their answer and walked back to the ramp.

Noah climbed the ladder.

Patrick scrambled up after Noah. Patrick said, "Uh? Hello, Mrs. Noah?"

Beth was right behind him. She popped her head up and glanced around the area. She didn't see Mrs. Noah.

But she did see someone sitting in the living quarters: Amelia Darling.

The time-traveling scientist was leaning back on a cushioned chair. Her feet were on a stool. A large bag with arched leather handles sat at her feet. She held a wooden cup in her hand.

"Well, blow me down," Amelia said. She raised her cup in greeting. "Beth! Imagine meeting you here!"

Beth hurried up the ladder. She walked toward the others.

Noah seemed nervous. He wrung his hands. The dove on his shoulder cooed several times. He looked at the cousins.

The man who had just stared down giants seemed afraid of Amelia.

"What do I do with her?" Noah asked the cousins. "She just appeared here this morning."

Patrick pointed at the woman. "Are *you* Amelia?" he asked.

"None other," Amelia said, standing. She set down her cup. "I see you've met Noah. He's such a nice man. Such a nice . . . cruise director. He let me stay and gave me some tasty spring water."

Beth's brows furrowed. She scowled at this woman

wearing modern clothes and a modern hat.

Amelia laughed. “Don’t pucker your forehead, dear,” she said. “You’ll get wrinkles at a young age.”

“What do you want?” Beth asked, folding her arms across her chest.

“I want the same thing you do,” Amelia said. “A trip on the most famous voyage of all time!”

Patrick thought Amelia was acting as if the ark were her home. She was nestled in the chair with her things nearby. She seemed as settled as the creatures who had moved in. A pair of barn owls had nested in the rafters. At the base of the wall were a few holes. Patrick saw a mouse head peep out. Then it went back in its hole.

He wondered if it was one of God’s chosen mice. *Would Noah allow rodents and cockroaches to stow away?*

Beth was talking to Noah. “You can’t let her stay,” she said. “She’ll cause trouble.”

“Now, now,” Amelia said. “How can you say that? I’ve brought some things to improve the place.”

She bent down and picked up the bag that was next to the wood chair. The bag was made from fabric with flowers printed on it.

Amelia stood and took out a tube of paper. She unrolled it and laid it across a nearby table. “See,” she said. “I’ve got blueprints for improvements to the top deck.”

Patrick studied the blueprints.

“A swimming pool?” Patrick said.

Amelia nodded.

Noah came close and peered at the plans. “Hmmm,” he said.

Beth pointed at a sketch near the bottom of the paper. “What’s this section?”

“Oh, just a few changes I need for my personal space,” Amelia said. “A private bath. An airflow system so the animal smells are vented. And a small kitchen so I can prepare my food. Gluten-free, of course.”

Amelia stood and walked around the living space for Noah and his family. Her high-heeled sandals clunked with each step. She touched the wood wall and ran her hand along it. She tested one of the beds by pushing on the straw mattress.

"You did an amazing job on the carpentry," she said to Noah. "The cedar is such a nice choice. Aromatic *and* weatherproof."

"*Gopher wood*," Noah said. "And the outside still needs to be covered in pitch. That will seal the wood and keep the ark from leaking."

Amelia lifted her hand and pointed her index finger skyward. She said, "Ah! I have just the thing."

She hurried back to her bag. She produced a metal can. "SEALANT" was written on the front in red letters. She unscrewed the top and offered the can to Noah. "This will protect the wood," she said. "I can bring more if you like it."

The old man leaned over and sniffed it. "Hmmm," he said. "Smells like beeswax." He smiled eagerly at Amelia.

Amelia nodded and said, "The wax is mixed with linseed oil. Totally good for the planet."

Beth scratched her head. She said, "That will probably work. But I thought Noah was supposed to use something else. I just can't remember what."

Noah's face flushed. He pushed the can of sealant away. "God told me to use pitch to seal the wood. And pitch it shall be!" he said.

Amelia twisted the lid back onto the can. "No need to get huffy," she said. She sat back down in the chair and adjusted her hat.

The dove cooed in Noah's ear. He stood up tall. "I must ask you to leave now," he said. "The ark is for believers only. We're following God's plan here."

Amelia laughed, showing white perfectly straight teeth. Dimples appeared on her cheeks. "But God is so . . . *old-fashioned*," she said. "He needs to change with the times. Let's go up to the top deck and try the sealant, shall we?"

Amelia offered the can of sealant to Noah again without

standing up. “It’s much easier than boiling and mixing your own pitch. What harm could it do?”

Patrick wondered if Noah would change his mind.

But Noah shook his head. “I see the kind of person you are,” he said. He raised his crook and shook it with each word. “You know *about* God, but you do not *obey* Him.”

Amelia crossed her legs at the ankles. She settled even deeper into the cushion. “Fine. But I’m not leaving this boat,” she said.

Noah sighed. “I’ll be back with one of my sons,” he said to Amelia. “But it would be best if you left on your own.” Noah turned and walked down a long aisle.

The Arachnids

Noah was soon out of sight. Patrick was wondering what to do about Amelia when his earbuds vibrated. *People are afraid of spiders*. The message was just a tiny squeak.

He looked around the deck area. Where had *that* message come from?

Watch this! it said. The squeak came from the floor.

A spider crawled out from one of the holes. It was brown and hairy, about six inches long. It had a plump belly and white rings on its leg joints. A second one followed. It was a little smaller and thinner.

"Tarantulas," Patrick said softly. Then he added, "Scorpions!"

Two yellow scorpions with black backs had also appeared. Their tails curved in an arc, each stinger pointing forward. Then many pairs of smaller spiders crawled out of the hole. There were also more scorpions—gray, black, and brown ones. All of them started marching toward Amelia.

Patrick squatted and studied them. "Just don't bite her," Patrick whispered.

He looked at Beth. He guessed she was too far away to

hear the little creatures. Plus, she was talking loudly to Amelia.

"Give us back the control unit for the Imagination Station," Beth said. "Mr. Whittaker doesn't want you to have one."

"He can't do anything about it," Amelia said. She held up her hand and studied her fingernails. "I built it. I'm going to keep it."

"Is it in your bag?" Beth asked.

At that, Amelia picked up the bag by the handles. She held it tight against her waist.

Beth grabbed the bag's fabric edge and tugged.

Patrick watched the army of arachnids march over Amelia's sandal. They started up her leg.

The larger tarantula jumped to the top of the chair. "Follow me," Patrick heard through the device.

"Ooo!" Amelia suddenly shouted, seeing all the little critters. She stood and kicked her shoes off. She dropped her bag. Then she climbed on top of a wood table.

Patrick heard a hissing sound. He turned and looked at the hole. The two orange vipers had returned. And not only those two but also several more snake couples slithered out. All of them headed toward Amelia.

"You did this!" Amelia shouted at Patrick.

"No," Patrick said. "The spiders got the idea all by themselves. They must have asked the snakes to join them."

"Aha! You admit it!" Amelia said. "Whit gave you something to communicate with. I saw you come to the ark with those saber-toothed tigers. So, you can talk to animals, snakes, *and* spiders!"

Beth said, "Don't forget the scorpions—they're arachnids. They have eight legs like spiders do."

Amelia said, "I know that! *I am a scientist.*"

The parade of snakes, scorpions, and spiders almost encircled Amelia. They started crawling up the table leg. Her only escape was the nearby ladder.

“I’m leaving,” Amelia said. “I hate snakes! I hate spiders!” She looked at Patrick and Beth. “Some of those are poisonous, you know.”

The snakes slithered, hissing and flicking their tongues. The orange vipers rose up and hissed.

Amelia glared at Beth and Patrick. Then she jumped off the table and picked up her shoes. She scrambled down the ladder.

The animals on the first-floor deck sounded an alarm. Even the giraffes bugled. Through the earbuds she heard Panthero growl, “Go away, or you’ll feel what my fangs can do!”

Beth heard Amelia shout, “Out of my way, you overgrown cats. I’m leaving now! But I’ll be back. You’ll be sorry then!”

Patrick looked around at all the creatures who had helped. “Thank you,” he said. “She’s gone for now.”

The arachnids crawled along the floorboards. The snakes slithered. All headed back toward the hole, two by two. In seconds they had slipped into the crevice.

Beth said, “That was amazing! And look!” Beth pointed to the bag on the floor. “Amelia left her bag behind.” She knelt to open it.

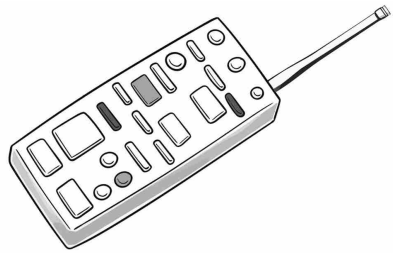
“Wait,” Patrick said. “Is it okay to go through her personal stuff?”

Beth paused. “Mr. Whittaker said we needed to get that remote control back,” she said.

Patrick nodded. “Right, Mr. Whittaker said, ‘See if you can find it.’ ”

“Okay, then,” Beth said. “I’ll see if I can find it.”

She pulled open the bag. The first things she saw were the sealant and blueprints. Then a pair of binoculars, a comb, a stick of deodorant, some lipstick, and a can of hair spray. Several pairs of pliers and wires. Three AAA batteries, and finally a rolled-up magazine titled *Inventors Daily* at the bottom. Beth unrolled the magazine and discovered the remote control. She held it up.



“Now what do we do?” she asked.

“Mr. Whittaker said we’d know what to do when the time came.”

The cousins looked at each other. They shrugged. Beth slipped the remote and the binoculars into her sack with the leaves. Then she closed up Amelia’s bag.

The sound of heavy footfalls made Beth look up. A trapdoor above the living quarters lifted. Someone on the deck above slid a ladder down the opening.

Feet in leather boots appeared. And then the hem of a red tunic.

Amora!

Japheth

Amora stood in the center of the living area. She now wore a breastplate and head armor. She had a large leather bag at her side. Its strap hung over her shoulder. A quiver of arrows and a bow were strapped to her back. A leather whip was coiled and attached to her armor.

A tall man came down the ladder next. He was wearing similar leather armor. An axe hung from his waistband. He held a spear with a pointed metal tip.

"The new woman left," Patrick said. "You don't need those weapons anymore."

The side of Amora's mouth twitched. It was *almost* a smile. "Noah did ask us to get the woman off the ark. Thank you. I see that you managed."

"With the help of the spiders and snakes," Patrick said.

Beth added, "And the other arachnids—the scorpions."

Amora said, "You seem to be useful already. My husband, Japheth, and I are leaving to collect more roots and fruit for food. The orchards are across the valley past the town."

Beth asked, "Why do you need weapons? You're not

going to hurt the animals, are you?"

Amora's husband, Japheth, spoke. "Hurt the animals? You aren't from around here, are you?"

The cousins shook their heads.

Japheth said, "We'll have to keep a lookout for giants or townsfolk. There are many who don't like us or this ark. We carry the weapons to protect ourselves."

"Even if the people get mad, we'd like to help," Beth said. "We can gather fruit or dig roots."

Amora said, "You may come if you bring the big cats for protection. I may not be able to save you if you get in trouble."

"It's a deal," Patrick said.

Beth asked Japheth, "Why aren't your brothers coming to help?"

Japheth said, "Ham is putting on a coat of pitch. Shem is tending to the animals and building new stalls. More creatures came than we expected. We've never seen so many kinds of animals.

"But come—we mustn't waste daylight," Japheth said. "It's already past noon."

Patrick emptied the five paintbrushes out of his sack so he'd have more room to carry food. Beth said, "I'm keeping the leaves with me." She patted her bag. "They don't take up much room. And of course, I have the remote and the binoculars."

The group left through the ark's open door. The saber-cats came alongside Patrick and Beth, purring as they walked. Panthero rubbed his head against Patrick's legs.

They walked through a valley and turned at the river. Several sheep were drinking at a small water inlet. The males had large, curly horns on their heads.

"We had to get some extra animals," Japheth said. "God told us to bring them for making sacrifices."

Patrick gulped. He patted a sheep and felt a little sad. He was glad that animal sacrifices weren't needed anymore because God's Son, Jesus, had died for the sins of the world.

Amora said, "We let the flock out of the ark to graze

two days ago. Then my cousins stole every last sheep. We have to bring them back."

Japheth put a hand on Patrick's shoulder. He said, "We will lead this group back to the ark. Amora and the girl will gather food."

Patrick looked at Beth.

"Go ahead with Japheth," she said. "Just let me keep Panthero."

Re-ow-ow. Panthero agreed with the idea.

Patrick followed Japheth to the river with Felina. He looked back to wave to Beth, Amora, and Panthero. But they were already out of sight.

Amora's steps were at least four feet apart. Beth had to jog to keep up with her.

Amora stopped occasionally to dig up a root or a mushroom. She put them in the shoulder bag. Then she marched on.

Beth could see a town of sorts ahead of them. As they came closer, a coldness crept into Beth's soul. The town looked more like a war zone.

Half of the stone houses were nothing more than a heap of rock. Broken carts and wagons littered the sides of the path. Whatever wood or straw had been used in buildings was burned. The whole town was charred.

"What happened here?" Beth asked.

"Not sure what happened this time," Amora said. "The townsfolk argue a lot. Then they fight. When the fighting stops, they set fire to the homes of their enemies."

Beth saw movement up ahead. She squinted. Then she started jumping up and down. "There's a platypus!"

She turned to Amora and said, "It lays eggs! And it has a bill for a mouth like a duck! That's a one-of-a-kind mammal!"

"Mammal?" Amora said.

Beth kept jumping as she spoke: "Mammals are animals that have warm blood and a backbone. And skin with hair or

fur."

"And this one lays eggs instead of having live babies?" Amora asked.

"Yes," Beth said. "The mother nurses the baby with milk. But the milk oozes out of ducts in her skin."

Amora said, "That can't be. It must be a bird."

Beth said, "You'll see. Maybe they'll have babies on board the ark."

The platypus pair passed on webbed feet. Beth was surprised at how fast they moved on land.

A pair of wallabies followed. Beth thought they looked just like miniature kangaroos.

"These animals have traveled a long way," Beth said. "I think they're from Australia."

"Where is this Australia?" Amora said.

Beth looked at the sun. She knew she was near modern-day Iraq. She pointed to the south and east. "It's a long way that way, across the big waters where the rivers end."

Beth sat down on a rock and waited for more animals. The brown wallabies stopped in front of her and made a *clicking* sound. Beth bent low and scratched their chins. Then they were on their way.

Suddenly, a large kangaroo jumped in front of Amora. It was more than six feet tall. It thumped its back feet rapidly.

In an instant, the giantess had her bow drawn and an arrow ready.

Beth put her hand up. "It's just a kangaroo and its joey," she said.

Amora lowered her weapon. "I'm not going to hurt the creatures," she said. "But I hear townsfolk."

Beth's hearing wasn't good enough to detect anything, but Panthero must have heard something too. He growled and ran in the direction the kangaroo had come.

The mother kangaroo stopped and cocked her head. "You know my baby's name," she said in clicks and squeaks. "You must be from the Safe Place. We need help. My mate, Boomer, was trapped."

Beth reached in her bag. She pulled out the binoculars.

“These will help me see far ahead,” she told Amora.

Amora glanced at the binoculars. “Can’t see far through all the rocks and bushes,” she said. The giantess picked up Beth around the rib cage. She lifted her above her head. “See if you can stand,” Amora said. “I’ll hold your ankles.”

Beth planted her feet firmly on either side of Amora’s helmet. She had always wanted to stand on the shoulders of a giant. She lifted the binoculars to her eyes. “Oh no,” Beth said. “It’s Amelia.”

Amelia, Again

Amora set Beth down, and the giantess sprinted toward the commotion ahead.

Beth turned to the mother kangaroo. “Head to the Safe Place,” she said. “Take care of the joey. I’ll get Boomer back,” she said.

The kangaroo made a clicking noise and jumped off. Her huge tail pushed off the ground to speed her up.

Beth started running after Amora. Panthero was behind her, bumping her with his head to hurry her along.

They arrived at a mining town about ten minutes later. The hills had been stripped of greenery so that the rock face was exposed.

She entered a small courtyard. The houses surrounding the open area had not been burned too badly. But dead trees and rotting fruit lay on the ground. A feeling of dread wound its way into Beth’s stomach. It seemed like no one cared enough about their homes to take care of them.

A small crowd of onlookers stood gaping at animals in modern metal cages. To Beth, the dozen or so people in the group strangely reminded her of war prisoners, except they

were well fed and well dressed.

Amelia was telling the people about the zoo subjects. “Here’s an alligator,” she said. “It will one day live in North America.”

None of the townspeople were smiling. No one seemed impressed by the animals. Their clothes were drab colors. Many had burn marks on their faces and arms. Several townspeople wore medallions made from leather, bronze, and gold. The patterns on these medallions were in the shape of the sun, a circle surrounded with straight lines for rays.

And the townsfolk were eating modern snacks. They held plastic packages of cheesy puffs, chocolate, or snack cupcakes with cream inside. Beth saw a few empty aluminum soda cans tossed on the ground.

Is Amelia really bribing them with junk food? Beth wondered.

The government scientist looked out of place. She was wearing clothes that reminded Beth of a circus master. The look was complete with a red jacket and a top hat.

Amelia went back in the Imagination Station. She has new clothes and supplies, Beth thought. *But how? I have her remote control.*

But Beth had a bigger problem to worry about. Amora stood a few feet away from Amelia. She had an arrow ready in her bow, and it looked to be aimed right at Amelia’s heart. Beth stared at Amora’s hands gripping the bow and the arrow. She hadn’t noticed before that the giantess had six fingers on each hand.

“Let the creatures go,” Amora said to Amelia. “It’s my duty to keep these animals safe. I will fight till death to protect them.”

Beth looked at the caged animals. She wondered how Amelia had worked so quickly. Seven cages were arranged in a circle. Boomer, the male kangaroo, was hunched in the largest metal cage. His strong, thick tail was curled between his legs so he could fit inside.

Several birds were in other cages. Their eyes begged Beth to help them. There were parrots and toucans and gulls. A separate cage held two large birds with long beaks. One of them blinked at Beth. It had short, stubby wings like an ostrich. She knew it couldn’t fly. She’d seen one of the odd-looking birds before, but she couldn’t remember where.

Other cages held alligators. Another warthogs. Another raccoons.

Panthero growled. Beth knew she needed to ask for help. Amora would not back down until the animals were safe. And she didn’t trust Amelia. Because Amelia would have a plan. And it would be a good one.

“Go get Japheth and Patrick,” she said to Panthero using the translation device. “Run like the devil is after you.”

With Felina’s help, Patrick and Japheth gathered a few dozen sheep. They herded the sheep into a pasture area with walls made of stone. Parts of the walls were crumbling from

neglect. The herd *baa-baa-ed* in protest at first, but the sheep soon saw the grass and started to graze.

"I'll choose the best ewes," Japheth said. "Will you inspect the rams?"

"Sure," Patrick said. "What do I look for?"

Japheth raised an eyebrow. "You don't work with livestock?"

"Not sheep," Patrick said. "Just dogs." He often walked the dogs in his neighborhood for spending money.

"Check the sheep's teeth and toes first," Japheth said. "Look for any sign of infection on the skin. If the back teeth are worn down, it's too old."

Patrick went to a ram with a black head and white body. He lifted its lips. He tried sticking his fingers in its mouth. "Eww," Patrick said. "It's sticky in there."

Japheth laughed. "Check the molars from the outside." Japheth showed Patrick how to feel the sheep's jaw.

"Thanks," Patrick said. "I get it."

They selected seven pairs of sheep. They all had clean black hooves and strong teeth. The skin on their bellies glowed a healthy pink color. Their eyes were bright and clear.

"Now, to lead them to the ark," Japheth said. He used his spear as sort of a shepherd's crook.

The group was boarding the ark a few minutes later. Panthero came running up the ramp.

Re-ow-ow-ow-ow, Panthero growl-talked.

Patrick heard words through his earbuds. "There's a big problem in town," Patrick said.

"What?" Japheth asked. The man's hand gripped the spear, his knuckles turning white.

"Is Amora in danger?" he asked.

Patrick paused. He didn't know how to explain this. Panthero growled again to hurry him along.

"There's a . . . zoo," Patrick said.

"A what?" Japheth's eyelids popped wide open. He simply stood and stared at Patrick.

"I'll explain on the way," he said. "It's that new woman, Amelia—again."

The Zoo

Amora let loose the arrow.

Pffft.

It struck Amelia's hat right in the middle and carried it about fifteen feet away.

Amelia smoothed her hair and smiled. She bowed in a theatric gesture and turned to the crowd. "Step right up!" she shouted. "See the giantess lose her temper!"

The crowd roared with mean-sounding laughter.

Amora started to reach for her quiver to grab another arrow. But a thin young man from the crowd jumped up and grabbed her arm before she could touch an arrow.

Instantly, Amora spun around like a dancer, freeing her arm and reversing the hold. Amora now had the young man's arm bent behind his back. She twisted it so far Beth thought the bone would snap.

The young man squealed.

Beth knew this fighting would end badly for Amelia, the onlookers, or the animals. *God, help us settle this peacefully*, she prayed.

Suddenly, the giantess let go of the young man. He

stumbled forward. His leather sandal caught on a rock, and he fell facedown in the dirt. His arms splayed outward.

"She killed him!" a woman shouted in a hoarse voice.

The onlookers dropped their junk food. Some drew daggers from inside their cloaks. Others grabbed heavy sticks. They rushed toward Amora, their weapons lifted high.

Beth's heart nearly jumped out of her throat with fear. She ducked behind Boomer's cage.

Amora was ready for the attackers. Her legs and arms were much longer than anyone else's. She was able to kick two of the attackers away while she loaded her bow. She leaped on top of a large cage and took aim.

"Who wants an arrow through the heart?" she shouted.

"An eye for an eye!" one of the older men shouted. "A life for a life!"

The crowd roared in agreement. "Get her!"

A woman threw a log at Amora.

Amora lifted an arm and knocked it away as if it were a fly.

A rock came flying. It hit Amora's helmet and plinked away.

It would take a cannonball to hurt her, Beth thought.

Beth heard rapid clicks and squeals come from Boomer's cage. She listened with the earbuds. "Let me out," the kangaroo said. "I can help."

Beth released the clip on the metal cage's door.

Boomer pushed open the door with his head. He crawled out slowly on his short front arms until his tail was free. Then he exploded into action.

He jumped in the air and aimed his hind legs at one adult.

Pow!

The man was pelted backward ten feet. He fell on his rear end.

The crowd laughed.

"More! More!" the woman with the hoarse voice shouted.

Another man came up behind Boomer and grabbed the

kangaroo's thick tail. Boomer spun around, but the man held on. Boomer spun again, faster this time. The man couldn't hold on and tumbled away.

The sound of a whip snapping came suddenly from behind. Everyone turned to see what was happening. Amelia had frightened Boomer back into his cage with the whip. She snapped the cage shut again.

"Bravo to the kangaroo," shouted Amelia. "But this is *my* show." She snapped the whip. She pushed her way toward Amora and the cages. She was pulling the young man who had grabbed Amora's arm.

The crowd gasped. Amora lowered her bow.

"As you can see," Amelia said, "you were a little hasty to think this young man was dead." She lifted the whip handle and motioned up and down his torso. "Tada! See, he's good as new. Now, we can get back to the animal show."

While everyone was looking at Amelia and the young man, Beth crawled to the birds' cage and opened it. She told them to be quiet and to wait. Then she opened the doors to the other cages. She told the animals inside them to wait too.

"Now go to the Safe Place!" Beth shouted.

The creatures burst from the cages. Birds lifted into the air with furious flaps of their wings. Pairs of alligators, warthogs, and raccoons headed in the direction of the ark.

Boomer hopped out in front of them and led the way. At the end of the line was the pair of big, flightless birds. They moved on large feet that looked like giant chicken feet. Their short, fluffy tails swung to and fro.

Amelia rushed toward the walking birds. She snapped her whip. "No, not the dodos!" she said. But the birds kept walking. She pulled the rope off of her belt. "Stop, dodos! Stop!"

Amelia formed the rope into a lasso. She threw it over the smaller dodo's head. Then she pulled. The bird was caught.

Amora screamed in rage. She raised her bow.

Beth shouted, "Stop! Don't hurt that woman!"

But Amora let loose the arrow.

Pfft.

It hit Amelia in the left side of her chest. The arrow ripped through the red jacket and stuck with a *thud*. Amelia fell backward, the arrow's fletching pointing to the sky.

That looked like her heart! Beth thought. Her own chest fell as if it had been crushed. *Can someone die in an Imagination Station adventure?*

The Dodo Birds

Patrick and Japheth ran past an empty town with crumbled, burned homes.

Patrick shivered at the sight. The homes had been vandalized and burned. No one could possibly live there. Barely two stones were left stacked on each other. A chill settled on him like a wet blanket.

They ran up a little hill and crested it. The saber-toothed tigers were together now, just over the ridge. A large kangaroo, two alligators, two warthogs, and two raccoons were talking to the big cats.

Patrick heard "giantess," "cages," and "arrow in the heart." But most of all he sensed panic and the words *Safe Place*.

A group of birds flew overhead. They were so low Patrick could hear their wings flap. Their feathers were colorful like the ones Patrick had seen in books about South America and Africa.

"The woman has fallen!" they squawked, chirped, and tweeted. In seconds they had vanished.

Felina *re-ow-ow*ed and raced after the birds.

Japheth said, “What’s going on?”

Patrick answered, “A female person is hurt. She maybe has an arrow through her heart?”

Japheth raised his spear in the air. He let out a Tarzan-like yodel. The veins in his neck popped out, thick and purple. And then he ran down the hill.

Patrick was frozen in shock. *Was it Beth? Was it Amora? Was it Amelia? Or was it someone he hadn’t met yet?*

Panthero nudged Patrick. “What are you waiting for?” he *re-ow-ow*ed.

Patrick woke from his daze. He started to run. His legs felt like rubber when he arrived at a small clearing surrounded by stone houses. Candy wrappers and empty potato chip bags blew in the wind. A few soda cans lay on the ground.

How did all this trash get here? he wondered. He knew he should pick up the trash. But for now, finding Beth was more important.

He saw two large, odd-looking birds searching the ground for food. Next, he saw Japheth and Amora together in an embrace.

Check. The giantess is okay, he thought.

He scanned the area, looking for Beth.

Panthero bolted past him and slipped through a group of townsfolk.

Patrick followed the giant cat. He stood at the back of the group. The townsfolk were muttering to one another.

“I wanted to kill the giantess,” an old man said. “A life for a life. Too bad the boy wasn’t dead.”

“Maybe this other one is,” a woman said. “Then we can get revenge.”

Yikes, Patrick thought. *Is the “other one” Beth? Is she dead?* He pushed through the group and saw her. Beth was kneeling next to Amelia. He sighed with relief at seeing his cousin. But then he gasped.

Beth’s hand was on the fletching of an arrow. It was sticking out of the left side of Amelia’s chest.

Beth made a grunting noise and yanked the arrow out.

The tip was clean. No blood.

Beth lifted Amelia's wrist.

"Are you feeling for her pulse?" Patrick asked.

She smiled at him in greeting. Then she nodded and said, "Her pulse is strong."

"Is there any water around here?" Patrick said. "She'll wake up if we pour some on her."

"Don't worry about that," the woman said. "We prefer her dead."

Beth tried to shoo the townsfolk away by motioning with her hands. The gawkers stayed anyway.

Patrick heard the woman mutter, "I wish that strange woman had captured those big-fanged cats, too."

Panthero's ears flattened. He raised a paw and swatted at the group. He growled low and deep.

The townsfolk stepped far away from the cat's claws and teeth.

"Thank you," Patrick told the big cat through the translation device. Then he scratched the back of Panthero's ears until he purred.

"What happened?" Patrick asked Beth.

Beth took a big gulp of air before answering. "Amelia was scaring the animals with her whip," Beth said. "Then she lassoed one. Amora shot an arrow to stop her. It hit Amelia, and she fell backward. I think she got knocked out when she fell."

Beth gently opened Amelia's red jacket. "There's something black underneath," she said. She knocked on it. The material thudded.

Suddenly Amelia sat up. She said, "Government-issued bulletproof vest." She lifted a hand to straighten her hair. "And this one is apparently arrow proof too." She looked at Beth. "Did you bring my hair spray?"

"No!" Beth said. "Your bag is still on the ark." She didn't mention the remote control or the binoculars in her own bag. "And I'm not your hairdresser."

Amelia frowned. “No need to get all huffy,” she said.

Patrick picked up the arrow. He inspected the tip and said, “The vest saved your life.”

Beth stood and offered Amelia a hand up.

Amelia grabbed Beth’s hand and pulled herself up.

“Patrick,” she said, “I am so glad that you and Beth are here. Surely you understand the importance of science. I need at least one dodo bird. I plan to clone it.” She pointed at the dodos. They were now sitting nearby on a pile of leaves. “I’ll bring it back. The dodos will still sail on the ark, I promise.”

The cousins were silent in shock.

Amelia smiled. “Good, no objections,” she said. “I can count on your help?”

“No,” Beth said. “We’re going to send you home!” Beth wondered if she should take out the remote control now.

But suddenly Amora and Japheth were by Patrick’s side. The two looked very powerful in their armor. Beth saw that Amora was significantly taller than her husband.

Amora snatched the arrow out of Patrick’s hands. She motioned with it toward Amelia. “She lives,” Amora said. “By what magic have you been saved? The arrow was true. It hit your heart.”

How do I explain a bulletproof vest? Beth wondered. But she didn’t have to.

“Well, lucky for you that you *didn’t* kill me,” Amelia said. “Those townsfolk would have killed you. ‘A life for a life’ is the rule around here.” Amelia stepped up toward Amora, but she looked very short compared to the giantess.

But Amelia didn’t seem to mind. The scientist tilted her head back to make eye contact with the giantess. “Let that be a lesson to you,” she said. She lifted an arm and wagged a pointed finger in Amora’s face. “Leave me alone! And leave my zoo animals alone too.”

Amelia turned to Patrick and Beth. “Tell the dodos to come to me,” she said. “I know you can talk to them somehow.” She picked up her rope from the ground. She started spinning the lasso again.

The dodos seemed to know they were being talked

about. They came over to see what was happening. The birds' heads were covered in white and brown feathers. One of them winked a large beady eye at Beth.

Patrick shouted to the birds, "No, you need to run away from here!"

The birds turned around quickly. They ran past the cages, heading for a different path.

"Oh my," Amelia said to Amora and Japheth. "You'd better run after them. They are running the wrong way." She hooked a thumb over her left shoulder. "The ark is that way."

The couple followed the dodos. Patrick was right behind them.

Beth tried to follow, but Amelia grabbed her wrist.

"Let go of my arm," Beth said.

"Not a chance," Amelia said. "I need you to help me talk to some more animals. I want those saber-toothed tigers, too."

Beth watched the birds run on their stick-like legs. Then they stopped short and lowered their beaks. And suddenly they disappeared.

She heard the birds calling for help. "What happened?" Beth asked.

"The old cover-up-a-deep-hole trick," Amelia said. "That's what happened. There's a reason they're called dodos. They stopped to eat the food I set out on top of the trap."

"That's how you caught the kangaroos and alligators, too," Beth said. "How many holes are there?"

"Hundreds," Amelia said. "There are underwater springs here that sometimes create these holes. But the townsfolk diverted the water for their mining. I just covered the holes up with some grass and sticks, that's all."

Beth turned toward the others to warn them. She saw that Japheth and Amora were in hot pursuit of the dodo birds, and Patrick was only steps behind. Beth opened her mouth to shout for them to watch for holes. But it was too late.

Japheth and Amora suddenly disappeared too.

The Pits

Patrick stepped close to the edge of the hole. He leaned over and shouted, “Are you all right?”

“Yes,” Japheth said. “But it’s too deep for us to climb out.” He was standing on Amora’s shoulders with his arms raised. But Patrick couldn’t reach him.

“I’ll be right back with help,” he said.

Patrick hurried back to Amelia and Beth. “I need your rope to pull Amora out,” he said.

“Why should I help her?” Amelia said. She had found her top hat with the arrow hole in it. She put it on her head. “She’ll only try to kill me again.”

Beth spoke up. “Amelia has a point,” she said. She grinned at the joke. *A point like an arrow!* But then her face went serious. “Amora will do anything to keep the dodos safe. But we can’t just let her kill Amelia.”

Patrick knew she was right. And he couldn’t promise to keep Amora from harming anyone who hurt the animals. But what could they do? Amelia wouldn’t willingly give up the dodo. Neither would Amora and Japheth.

“Oh no,” Amelia said. She pointed behind Patrick. “It’s

Captain Noah.”

Patrick turned in the direction Amelia was motioning at.

Noah sat on a horse holding his shepherd’s staff. Felina walked in front of the rider and his horse.

And it wasn't just any horse. It was pure white—whiter than a marshmallow. The horse was so white it seemed to glow.

Beth whispered, "Jesus will ride a horse like that when He comes back to earth."

Patrick nodded.

The magnificent horse approached. Its muscles rippled with each step. Its mane fluttered white and wispy in the light breeze.

The remaining townspeople saw Noah and his horse. They quickly left. It was as if they melted into the town's rocks.

Noah approached. Amelia hid behind Beth, using her as a shield.

The horse bent low by straightening one front leg and bending the other. Noah gently slid off the horse.

"Where is my son?" Noah asked. "Where is my daughter-in-law?" His gaze was aimed directly at Amelia.

"They were careless and fell into a hole," Amelia said. She tried to sound carefree. But Patrick could tell she was nervous.

Noah took two steps closer to Amelia. "Try again," Noah said. "Tell me where Japheth and Amora are."

The horse snickered and snorted.

"Okay, okay," Amelia said. She took off her top hat and twisted the rim with her hands. "They fell in a hole that I had covered with sticks and grass."

"Thank you for the truth," Noah said. "You are not so lost as I thought."

"Lost?" Amelia said. "I'm a scientist and an airplane pilot. I never get lost."

Beth said gently, "Noah means *spiritually* lost. Having a hard heart. Being someone who enjoys evil so much they seek it instead of goodness."

"You are wise beyond your years," Noah said to Beth.

Beth's cheeks flushed, and she lowered her eyes.

Panthero brushed up against Patrick's legs. He heard Panthero mew. It was a soft cry. *Don't forget to help the dodos*.

Patrick boldly stepped toward Amelia. He took the whip and the rope from her side.

Beth moved away with Patrick.

Amelia was standing alone. Then she lifted her chin. “I still want the dodo. I can ruin your whole voyage if you won’t let me have one.”

Well, the old, selfish Amelia isn’t going anywhere, Patrick thought.

Noah looked puzzled. “A dodo?”

Patrick said, “A big, goofy bird. Where we come from, the dodos are extinct.”

Noah seemed sad to hear that. He said, “Adam, the first man, was my great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandfather. God gave him the responsibility to care for all creatures. As his great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandson, it’s my job now.” Noah stroked his beard. “It’s important to get those birds on the ark and save them.”

Amelia jumped up and down. She waved her top hat in excitement. She said, “I’m just like you, Noah! I want to make sure the dodos will be around for thousands of generations. Let me take one home, just for a day. What do you say?”

Noah cocked his head. He asked, “Where are the birds now?”

Amelia paused. “Um, well, they have fallen into a pit too,” she said.

“And who trapped them?” Noah asked.

“I did, but it was for their own good,” Amelia added quickly. “Surely you can understand that?”

Noah shook his head. “I can’t. You have stopped the birds from getting to the ark as soon as possible. That is God’s plan. It is not for you—or anyone—to change it.”

Patrick knew what he had to do. He took Amelia’s rope and whip. He headed to the pits. The white horse followed.

Patrick put the rope around the horse and tied it. He tossed the loose end into the pit with Amora and Japheth.

The couple held on to the rope, and the horse backed up.

Japheth and Amora were pulled out of their trap. They

each held some plastic bags of some kind.

The white horse nickered and trotted back to Noah.

Patrick tossed Amelia's whip into the pit. He didn't want her using it again.

Amora then wrapped the rope around Patrick's waist. She lowered him into the pit with the dodos.

Patrick held each bird under one of his arms. Amora and Japheth pulled them all out. The dodos were free.

"Hurry to the Safe Place," Patrick told the dodos.

The birds squawked and ran in the direction of the ark.

That's when he heard Beth shout, "No way! There are two?"

The Legacy of Enoch

Amelia held a remote control for the Imagination Station. She had taken it out of a hidden compartment in her top hat.

"Please, don't disappear here," Beth said. "That's not how you do an adventure."

"What do you know about anything?" Amelia asked. She sneered and backed away from Beth. She pointed at the dodos that were getting away. "You had your chance to help me get a dodo. We could have been famous in the twenty-first century. But no! You had to side with Captain Perfect here."

Noah was standing nearby with the horse. The dove hopped onto the horse's head and cooed.

"Captain Perfect?" Noah said. "Who is he?" He stared at Amelia.

The Model T Imagination Station appeared just then.

Beth saw it. Amelia saw it. But Noah couldn't see the machine.

Amelia climbed in. She twisted the steering wheel. Then the machine disappeared and the scientist with it.

Noah teetered on his feet. He blinked several times.

The white horse snorted. The dove flapped its wings in

surprise.

"What happened?" Noah asked. "Did God take her away like he took my great grandfather Enoch?"

Beth remembered the short account of Enoch. He had disappeared when he was 365 years old. It was the same number as days in a year. The Bible says one day Enoch was walking with God, and then "he was not."

"No, no, no!" Beth said to Noah. "It's not that simple. But don't worry, Amelia is not dead."

"I don't think Enoch is either," Noah said.

Beth wrinkled her nose in thought. *So, what happened to Enoch?*

Noah folded his arms in contentment. He said, "I sense God has a plan for Amelia. She will walk with Him one day. Just . . . not yet."

Beth hoped his words were true.

The footsteps of Patrick, Amora, and Japheth broke up their conversation.

Japheth looked around. "Where is the woman with the funny clothes? I want to know where she got these." He held up a bag of cheesy puffs. "I found a box of these in the pit. They taste wonderful!"

Beth and Noah rode away together on the beautiful white horse. Patrick waved goodbye to Beth. She was going back to the ark with Noah. Felina and Panthero followed close behind them.

Patrick, Amora, and Japheth still needed to go to the orchards, on the other side of the town in a small valley. They walked past the charred buildings and the countryside that opened up to vast pastures and farmland.

They met some farmers and traded several bags of cheesy puffs for apples, cabbages, and grapes. A wooden pushcart was added to the deal for four bags more.

One farmer had a sun design burned onto his forehead. His hair had been shaved off, but it had grown out into stubble. He asked, "Is that big boat ready yet?"

Japheth said, “Almost. We’re just gathering the last of the food.”

“Noah was once a friend. A good friend,” the farmer said. “Then he went bonkers. Said he could talk to God. It’s a pity. He’s been talking about a flood for a hundred years.”

He looked up at Amora. Then the farmer turned to Japheth. “What’s a giant half-breed doing with you? Her kind usually takes, not trades. They clobber us farmers till we give them what they want.”

The man’s words made Patrick feel uneasy. He was being rude on purpose.

Amora rolled her eyes.

Japheth said, “Amora knows clobbering is wrong. She is one-quarter giant . . . and three-quarters angel.” He took her hand. They laced their fingers together. Amora’s extra finger wiggled on the outside of their clasp.

“Yeah,” said the farmer. “An ‘angel’ who tried to kill someone today. I heard about that. And she’s marked. She’s got them six fingers.”

The couple dropped hands. Japheth gripped his spear. Amora reached for her whip.

Patrick used his wits. He spoke up. “Amora is nice,” he said in a soft voice. “She is not like her cousins Anak and Erum. She *chose* to be in Noah’s family and married Japheth.”

Then Patrick felt more confident. His voice got louder. “You can’t help how you’re born. But you can choose your friends. And Noah and his family are the only good people around here. That’s because they obey God.”

The farmer laughed. He said, “Well, I want more of these ‘cheesy puffs.’ So, I won’t offend you. But you’re as bonkers as they are. The sun is what keeps us alive and warm.” He tapped the marking on his forehead. Then he pointed at the sun in the sky. “No flood is coming today.”

Japheth said, “But it’s coming *tomorrow*. That’s what my father says. The animals have arrived. God is ready. Please come with us. All you have to do is pray to the Creator, the God who made the sun and everything else. He will show Himself. You just have to look.”

The farmer shook his head and sneered. He made a rude sign with one hand.

Japheth turned with a sad expression. He picked up the handles of the pushcart and started walking away.

Patrick and Amora followed him along the dirt path.

The farmer's laughter echoed behind them. Then Patrick heard a *splat*.

A bunch of rotten grapes had landed near Amora's boots.

She stepped over the insult and kept walking toward the ark.

None of them looked back.

The Koalas

The white horse bowed at the ark's ramp. Beth slid off the majestic animal first. Then Noah followed and balanced himself with the staff. The horse nickered and trotted inside the ark. The dove on Noah's shoulder cooed and ruffled its feathers as if saying goodbye to the horse. All Beth could understand was *coo*.

Beth saw a man she had never seen before. He stood near a tree and was talking to the branches. "Come on, little critters. Come on into the ark."

Noah and Beth approached him. Beth stepped over a pile of leaves sitting at the base of the tree.

"Shem," Noah said to the man, "what's wrong?"

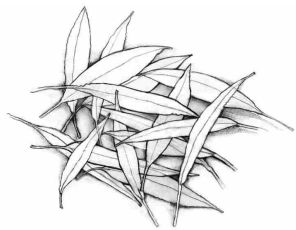
Beth recognized the name. He was one of Noah's sons.

Shem raised his hands in frustration. "I can't get those little brown creatures to come inside the ark."

Beth peered into the tree. Four cute brown eyes peered back at her. She took note of their round ears, white chests, and triangle-shaped noses. "It's a pair of koala bears," she said. "I think they come from the same place as the kangaroos, wallabies, and platypuses."

“All they do is sleep,” Shem said. “I built a nice stall for them. I put a tree inside and everything.” He pointed at the leaves on the ground. “They won’t move from their perch. They won’t eat. They spit out every leaf I give them.”

The word *leaf* reminded Beth of her bag. She looked inside past the remote control and the binoculars. She pulled out a handful of the thin, pointy leaves.



She handed the leaves to Shem. “Koalas are picky. I think these will work,” she said.

Beth held some leaves up to the koalas. One of them sniffed the leaf and took a bite. Then it handed the leaves to its mate. The koalas happily munched the leaves.

“They like them,” Shem said. “Let me look at those.”

Shem held the leaf by its stem. He twisted it with his fingers. It spun like a top. “I’ve seen these leaves before. The little critters will need more. But I’ll have to travel a few hours to get to that forest.”

Noah said, “You best hurry. It’s getting to be time.”

Shem waved as he headed into the wilderness. “Don’t forget to feed the birds,” he called over his shoulder.

The dove on Noah’s shoulder cooed again.

Beth spoke to the koalas. “Go on inside the ark,” she said. “You’ll be safe there. And you’ll get more of these leaves.”

The koalas grunted and squeaked back. They climbed down the tree and walked up the ramp to the ark.

Noah and Beth also went inside.

They passed the larger animals. Beth waved at them all. Some she petted as she went by. Gadola, the mammoth, gave her a friendly trunk hug. She gave the two kangaroos high fives. The giraffes lowered their heads. Beth gave them each a pat on the nose.

Noah took the koalas to their stall on the fourth deck. He put them next to the sloths and monkeys—two other animals who also like to live in trees.

Beth passed the platypus couple. An egg lay in their nest. Beth smiled to herself. *Wait till Amora sees that,* she thought.

She climbed up rope ladders past the living quarters for Noah’s family. She stopped on the top deck where the birds were.

Shem had left buckets of seeds and fruit for them. None of the birds left their homes. She made sure all of them had the correct food. But she made one mistake. A parakeet with red on the tips of its wings chirped. “Guava,” it said.

Beth removed the cup of seeds she’d given it. She looked through the bucket and offered it pieces of the red fleshy fruit.

She gave the dodos extra fruit and seeds. She felt sorry for all the stress they had experienced.

One of them called out, “Extinct! What does that mean?”

Beth’s heart did a flip. The birds must have overheard them talking; the earbuds translated the conversation without her knowing. She couldn’t tell the dodos the whole truth.

She thought for a moment. “It means you’re supposed to

love every minute of life. Even the hard times," she said. "And not only that, but thank God for every day you have. That's because you don't know what's going to happen next."

The birds honked and squawked in agreement. Beth was glad that dodo birds would live thousands of years before they died out.

She left that area and climbed to the open deck. She stood near the railing and took out the binoculars.

Patrick, hurry back, she thought. *The end of this lost land is coming.*

She heard cheerful voices coming from the other side of the deck. She walked around the small lookout structure on top of the ark.

A man and a woman were working together using cloths and a bucket. They looked at her and said a greeting.

Beth took a guess at the man's identity. "I'm Beth," she said. "And you must be Ham."

Ham tilted his head and smiled. He stopped working with the cloth.

"Yes," he said. "This is my wife, Gavina. And if you're not busy, we could use some help."

Cheesy Puffs

Patrick, Japheth, and Amora returned to the clearing in the town where Amelia had held the zoo. They split up to check the cages and the nearby pits. They wanted to be sure no animals were still trapped.

Patrick found some of Amelia's junk food. A six-pack of cans filled with raspberry soda lay in one shallow pit. He reached in and took the six-pack out. He showed the others how to open the soda can.

Amora sipped some soda. Then she stuck out her tongue. "Yuck," she said. "It's too sweet."

Japheth dribbled some soda out of his can. The liquid made a blue puddle. "That color is strange," he said. "I'm not drinking this."

Patrick guzzled his soda and poured out the open cans. Then he crushed the empty cans and put them in his bag along with the three full cans.

Patrick walked in front of the giantess. Japheth was pushing the cart full of food behind them.

Patrick noticed more trash on the ground. He didn't remember there being this much. *Was* all *that there when I*

came? he wondered. He picked up as much as he could. He was glad he'd left the paintbrushes on the ark.

The wind blew a small yellow box across his path. It said "Milk Buddies." Those were his mom's favorite candies. He would have remembered seeing that box.

He scanned the area. A trail of junk-food trash led to one of the charred, roofless houses. It had three full walls standing and half of a fourth. But he couldn't see inside from his angle.

There were other things on the trail too. Tracks. Animal tracks. Rabbit prints. Hoof marks. Duck tracks. The scratches of little mice feet. All of them led to the house.

What was that sound? he thought. *Were people talking inside?*

What he saw next chilled him. The horns of Erum the giant's helmet peeked above the walls.

He paused. He turned around. He made a shushing motion by putting his first finger to his lips.

But he didn't need to warn his friends. Amora already had her bow out with an arrow in place.

Japheth had his spear and axe ready to throw. He motioned for Amora to go to the far side of the house.

He whisper-screamed to Patrick, "Run to the ark! Don't look back!"

They're going to attack the house to save the animals!

Patrick ran.

He heard Japheth let out the Tarzan yodel. It was full of anger.

Patrick ran faster.

He heard Amora shout, "Leave the animals alone, cousins, or you'll get an arrow through your throat."

Then he heard Amelia laugh.

Patrick stopped and looked back.

Beth asked Ham, "Sure, what do you need help with?"

Ham slid a wood bucket toward her. "I made that pitch from tree sap and ash," he said. "We need to finish putting it

on the ark. This is how God wants the ark sealed against the floodwaters."

Beth looked at the cloth. Using that would make it difficult to get the pitch into the wood grain.

"I think I have something that will help this go much faster," she said. "I'll be right back."

Beth climbed down the rope ladder two decks. She entered the living area and found Patrick's five paintbrushes. She was back on the open deck in under three minutes.

Ham studied the paintbrush. "Clever," he said. "I can make my own later. I'll use birchwood to make the handle." He flicked the bristles. "Nice! Horsehair for the fringe."

Gavina said, "I'll get Noah's and Shem's wives. They've got to see these!"

Soon the three wives, Ham, and Beth were using the paintbrushes to spread pitch onto the ark. The work went quickly.

Beth took a break and moved to the deck railing. She saw something gray and cloudy wisping from the direction of the town.

She got the binoculars out of her bag. She pressed her eyes against the eye cups.

"The forest is burning!" she shouted.

Just then, a drop of rain fell on her forehead.

Patrick sneaked around the corner of the house and peered inside.

Japheth and Anak were in a battle using axes. Anak swung his axe wildly. Japheth swung with speed and skill. He hit Anak's leather armor, splitting it at the shoulder.

"Let the animals go!" Japheth shouted.

The giant screeched in answer, and static filled Patrick's ears. The awful noise made him cringe.

Amora and Erum were in a duel of sorts. Amora held a whip handle. She had wrapped the whip's thong around one of Erum's forearms.

With his other arm, he held a dagger. But Amora was too far away for him to hurt her with it. She deflected one swing with the metal bands on her wrists.

"You'll not stop us, cousin," Amora said. "Give up. Your defeat is sure."

"I will never stop hunting and hurting," Erum said. "I live to destroy!"

Amelia was leaning against one stone wall. This time she wore green army-type clothing. It looked like she had been dropping cheesy puffs into an animal cage near her. The little critters inside the cage seemed to be enjoying the snacks.

Patrick crept inside and made it to Amelia's side. "You're not supposed to give junk food to animals," he said.

Patrick noticed that the animals weren't in pairs. Some of the rabbits looked very old. They had white muzzles and yellowed teeth. Some of the ducks were just fluffy yellow chicks. There were at least eleven gray mice. These weren't animals God had sent to the ark. They were ordinary forest creatures.

Amelia flicked another cheesy puff into the cage. "Would you deny these little creatures their last meal?" she asked. Then she laughed.

Patrick felt a coldness settle in his heart. These animals and millions of others would die in the flood. Millions of people would too. It was all because humans had turned away from God.

"Amelia," Patrick said. "Please go back to our own time. Go home. You don't really want to be part of this world's evil."

Amelia waved a hand as if to shoo away Patrick's words. "Evil?" she said. "To me, Noah seems to be the evil one. He's got that big ark that could hold hundreds of people. And he's only taking eight. He wouldn't even offer me a spot

on his floating zoo. Do you call that goodness? He thinks animals are more important than his townsfolk neighbors."

Patrick frowned. "Noah is doing what God told him to do. That is good because God is good."

Amelia waved away Patrick's words. "Noah deserves everything that's coming to him."

Patrick felt uneasy. "What's 'coming to him'?" he asked.

Amelia didn't answer.

He looked around the house. Amora and Japheth were still in full battle against the two giants. Axes swung. Amelia's whip snapped.

"These aren't animals for the ark," he called. "Let's get out of here."

"Good luck," Amelia said. She tossed her empty cheesy puff bag on the ground.

Japheth made it out the door first. Then Amora snapped the whip to keep Anak and Erum away. She slipped outside.

But Patrick was trapped. The two giants blocked the exit.

Patrick reached into his bag. He grabbed a can of soda and threw it at Erum.

The giant ducked. The can hit the wall. The impact opened the pop top. Soda sprayed like a fountain all over Anak.

"You little pest," Anak said. "Just wait till I catch you. I'm going to roast you over a fire till your heart explodes!"

The giant swiped at Patrick, but Patrick rolled away.

Patrick grabbed a second can from his bag. He shook it. Then he popped it open. He aimed the opening at Anak's and Erum's faces.

Soda sprayed out of it like it was a hose, and the giants were blinded for a moment.

Patrick used those seconds to run outside.

Japheth and Amora were waiting.

"They're back," Amora said. She snapped her whip toward the hill.

A crowd of townsfolk had gathered at the crest. It was a big crowd now—many, many more than had come to Amelia's

zoo. Hundreds of people and giants had joined together. Some carried torches. Some carried pitchforks or shovels. A few had swords.

"A life for a life!" came a cry from the hilltop.

It was the young man Amora had knocked to the ground earlier.

Amora shouted, "I was defending myself! And you're fine—you're not dead! Grow up!"

The crowd didn't care. They wanted a reason to fight—any reason.

From behind Patrick, the giants burst out from inside the house. Erum and Anak carried Amelia. She was straddled between their two shoulders on some kind of harness.

"To the big wood boat!" she shouted. "Destroy everything here. You won't need it ever again. I have many cheesy puffs as a reward for your service."

The crowd cheered in approval.

A sudden series of snaps and pops filled the valley. The trees had been set on fire. They crackled as they burned.

"Run," Japheth said. "And don't—"

"Look back," Patrick said, finishing his sentence.

Amora suddenly grabbed him from behind. She tucked him underneath her muscular arm.

He bounced along as Amora rushed to the ark.

The smell of burning forest followed them.

He looked up and felt a drop of rain hit his forehead.

The Battle of the Lost

At the deck railing, Ham watched Beth and the wives working away with the pitch and new paintbrushes.

"Thank you for the pitch brushes," he called to Beth. "They work really well."

Beth glanced away from her work. "There's smoke coming from town," she said.

Ham shrugged. "The town is always on fire," he said. "It happens at least once a month."

Beth hopped down to the deck and handed the binoculars to Ham. "But look. It seems bigger," she said.

“Press your eyes against the little cups.”

“What are these?” he asked.

“Binoculars. They will help you see like an eagle does,” she said.

Ham gave her back the binoculars. “I am not an eagle,” he said. “I don’t need them.”

More raindrops plopped on the deck.

Ham said, “I’m going to tell Noah that the rain has begun.”

Beth nodded. She used the binoculars to check out the area.

She saw Shem coming back with a large sack. It was slung over his shoulder.

Good. The koalas will have enough leaves, she thought.

She saw Amora and Japheth coming along the path out of the valley. They were running. And they didn’t seem to have fruit with them.

Then she blinked and looked again. Amora was carrying Patrick as if he were a sack of flour.

Amelia and the giants, Anak and Erum, were not far behind. Amelia was riding between the giants’ shoulders like the queen of an army.

Trailing like ants were the townsfolk. They held gardening tools as weapons. But many others carried huge torches. Their flames danced like fall leaves in the wind.

“*No!*” whispered Beth. She dropped the binoculars.

The ark had just been covered with pitch made from trees. She knew sap burned easily. The ark would quickly burn to the ground.

She looked at the sky. Only a few small clouds dropped sprinkles on the deck. It wasn’t enough water to put out a birthday candle, much less a real fire.

Beth turned to the three women who were still spreading the pitch.

“To battle,” she cried. “All hands—and animals—on deck!”

Amora and Japheth approached the ark's ramp. Amora set Patrick down. He sucked in air to catch his breath. He had been squeezed and bounced for twenty minutes.

Beth was already there waiting for them. The mammoths stood guard next to her. Gadola still carried Anak's club. The saber-toothed tigers *re-ow-ow*ed in greeting. Panthero rubbed his chin against Patrick's leg.

Amora was all business. She said, "I'll go to the open deck. I can shoot my arrows better from up there." She ran up the ramp.

Japheth said, "I'll get Ham. We'll boil the rest of the pitch. We can pour it on the giants if they come close." He also ran up the ramp.

Patrick heard women's voices. He turned to see three women rolling barrels toward the ark's opening.

Beth introduced them to him. She said, "These are the wives of Noah and the other two brothers."

One of them had buckets hanging from her bent elbows. She said, "We've got water in these barrels. We can douse the flames if the ark catches fire."

Another of the women said, "Shem is preparing to release the birds of prey. They can attack the giants and claw out their eyes."

Finally, Noah came down the ramp. He was leading the white horse. The dove was perched on his shoulder. *Coo*.

"What's all this about giants and fire and doom and gloom?" he asked. "My sons are acting as if there is to be a battle."

"There is," Patrick said. "I saw the enemy. Giants, Amelia, and the townsfolk are maybe two minutes away."

Noah shrugged. The wind blew drops of rain that clung

to his bushy white eyebrows. “What is it to us? The ark and the animals will be safe. You can be sure of it. God has already won this battle for us.”

The white horse nickered in Noah’s ear. Patrick tried to translate, but the earbuds didn’t work.

Noah patted the horse’s nose. He said, “My friend would be honored to ride out to greet the attackers and ask for peace. He is a war horse and is feeling a bit bored on the ark.”

Patrick’s arm shot up as if he were in school. “I’ll go,” he said.

The horse snorted.

Noah said, “He prefers the girl.”

Beth gave Patrick a glance that said, *I’m sorry*.

The horse bowed and Beth climbed on his back. The horse swung his head, and his silky white mane rippled.

Beth heard eagle cries in the sky above her. The birds were ready. “For Noah and for the ark!” they squealed.

Horse and rider trotted out a hundred yards from the ark. Beth turned and looked at the top deck. Amora was standing by the railing. An arrow was in her bow, notched and ready. Ham and Japheth had thick gloves on their hands. They were holding a metal cauldron. Hot pitch was ready if they had to dump it on the giants.

Beth heard a hiss from the ground. The two orange vipers had followed her and the horse. “Giants hate snakes,” they hissed.

Beth sat forward again on the horse’s back.

Anak and Erum were now only about twenty feet away.

Amelia waved from her perch on their shoulders. “Have you come to surrender?” she asked. “You will have to obey me and let me be in charge of the ark.”

The horse nickered. It sounded like a chuckle.

“No,” Beth said. “We offer peace. Tell the giants and the townsfolk that God is real and He means business. Tell them to worship God and stop doing such evil, selfish things.”

“Then we can get on the ark?” Amelia asked.

The horse nodded and stomped its feet. It whinnied.

"Yes," Beth said, hearing the word in her earbuds. She was a bit surprised at the horse's answer. *Is it really not too late for these people?* she wondered.

Anak said, "You sound like my cousin. She's always nag, nag, nag. Stop clobbering people. Stop stealing." He spat on the ground. "Well, I won't!"

The giants rushed toward Beth.

"Wait!" Amelia cried.

Just then the vipers attacked. Each snake bit into one of the giants' calves.

The giants screamed and dropped Amelia. She landed on her rear end in the dirt.

Static from the giants' screaming filled Beth's ears.

"Stop!" Amelia cried out. "I want to talk more!"

Gadola and her mate rushed out of the ark. The mammoths lifted their trunks and trumpeted. They swung their huge tusks, and the giants were thrown sideways.

The eagles swooped down and clawed the giants' faces with razor-sharp talons. *Caw! Caw!* they cried.

Gadola turned to Amelia. The mammoth raised the club with her trunk. "No! No! No!" shouted Beth.

Gadola lowered the club.

The giants and Amelia were no longer a threat.

But townsfolk were almost upon them now. There were so many. Beth said, "Let's go, boy," in the horse's ear. But he stood still.

And for a few seconds, the townsfolk were still too.

Beth made eye contact with the old woman with the hoarse voice. She held a torch high above her head.

"Stop!" Beth shouted. "You know this is wrong!"

The woman screamed and threw the torch at Beth. She raised her arm in front of her face . . .

Suddenly, Beth was beside Patrick on the ramp. The white horse must have returned her to the ark. But it was nowhere to be seen now.

The saber-toothed tigers rushed toward the mob snarling and growling.

Amora's arrows flew from the upper deck. But there were too many attackers.

Japheth and Ham heaved the cauldron of pitch over the edge of the ark. But one of the townsfolk shouted, and they all stepped back.

The liquid splashed on the ground. One of the torches fell and lit it, and the pitch burst into flame.

A man threw his torch, and it hit the side of the ark.

Patrick went to pick it up. But another torch was thrown. And another.

The heat from the fire was growing. Sparks flew. Bitter-smelling smoke filled the area. Flames lapped at the side of the ark.

The women threw buckets of water on the burning pieces of wood.

"Retreat!" Japheth shouted from the top deck. "Go inside!"

The women were the first ones inside.

The big cats and the mammoths climbed back into the ark.

Beth and Patrick backed up as the ramp lifted up and closed.

"The snakes!" Patrick shouted.

"Amelia!" Beth shouted.

But it was too late. The door was sealed.

Patrick heard a clap of thunder and the loud sound of rain hammering the roof of the ark.

God's floodgates had opened.

Goodbyes

Beth and Patrick climbed the rope ladders. The three sons, Noah, and Amora were on the deck too. The rain was already calming the flames.

The townsfolk were shouting, screaming, and banging on the closed ramp. But they soon left. Beth guessed they would seek the highest ground they could.

The eagles circled and cawed. Shem whistled to them. The pair returned. And each bird held an orange snake in its claws.

"Thank you," Beth told the eagles. The eagles dropped their cargo on deck. The vipers twisted in their S-shaped way and slid below deck.

Beth and Patrick leaned against the railing. Beth found the binoculars and searched the rising waters for Amelia. *How is the water rising so quicky?* she wondered.

Patrick saw Amelia first. "There," he said. "She has climbed a pine."

In minutes the waters rose and were lapping at her ankles.

Noah joined them, watching and stroking his beard. His

cream-colored tunic was getting soaked. The bird cooed on his shoulder.

Amelia let go of the tree and swam toward the ark. She was sputtering and choking in the water.

She neared the ark and treaded water.

"Let me in!" she shouted. "I'll be good!"

Noah shook his head. "You're not ready yet," he said and walked away.

Amelia lifted her hand, and Beth saw she was holding something. It was a remote control for the Imagination Station.

"I'll see you back in Odyssey," she said. "Wait till I tell Whit you wouldn't let me on the ark."

Just then a wave swept over Amelia, and her hands came back up empty.

"She lost her remote control," Patrick said. "She's going to drown."

Beth looked inside her bag. She'd forgotten about it, but the remote was still there.

"Should I?" Beth said. "What if it takes her to outer space or something?"

"What if we do nothing?" Patrick said. "What will we tell Whit? That we let her drown?"

"I don't even know how it works," Beth said. "The antenna seems funny," she said.

Patrick took it from her hands and pressed the button in the middle. Nothing happened.

“Try pressing it three times in a row,” Beth said. “Three is a biblical number.”

Patrick quickly pressed the button three times.

The Model T appeared. It floated on the water, its tires allowing it to bob in the water.

Amelia swam to the Model T, doing the sidestroke. She didn’t wave goodbye. She said nothing. She pulled herself inside. In seconds the Model T vanished.

Patrick and Beth then heard a familiar hum. The Imagination Station—the helicopter-looking model they had used—had appeared.

Noah approached with his three sons and Amora.

“It’s time to go below deck,” Noah said. “It will rain for a while. We need to care for the animals now.”

Patrick said, “I think we’ll stay out here for now. We don’t mind the water.”

Japheth, Amora, Shem, and Ham waved goodbye. They opened a hatch and climbed down into the deck below.

After they were gone, Patrick reached into his bag. He offered Noah the last soda.

The dove cooed. This time Beth could understand it with the earbuds: “That dye in there—Brilliant Blue FCF—is the chemical compound $C_{37}H_{34}N_2Na_2O_9S_3$. It’s bad for you.” Beth thought that sounded more like one of Mr. Whittaker’s comments than the thoughts of a dove.

Noah held up a hand. He said, “Thanks, but I’ll pass.”

The bird winked at Beth.

Beth said, “It’s time for us to be ‘not.’ ”

Noah nodded. “Just like my great grandfather.”

Patrick seemed puzzled. “What did he mean?”

“I’ll tell you later,” Beth said.

They climbed into the Imagination Station. Patrick hit the red button.

Suddenly, everything went black.

Whit's End

Patrick climbed out of the Imagination Station. His tunic had been replaced with his twenty-first-century-style clothes. Beth was wearing jeans and a T-shirt.

They took their earbuds out and placed them on the workbench.

Patrick looked around. The workshop didn't have anyone in it.

"Mr. Whittaker," Beth called. "Where are you? We've got Amelia's remote control." She tossed it from one hand to the other in impatience.

Whit came down the stairs. He was holding a bag of cheesy puffs.

"Where did you get those?" Patrick asked.

"Let's talk about Noah first," Whit said. "What did you think of it all?"

"It's sad that all the townsfolk and the giants had to drown," Beth said. "I'm very glad Noah and his family got to safety."

"The townsfolk and the giants had chosen evil for so long that God did something to stop the cycle. Or at least slow

it down," Whit said.

"God won't do that again," Patrick said. "That's what the rainbow tells us."

"God promised He won't send a flood to destroy the world again. But Jesus will someday judge the world again," Whit said. "Choosing evil has consequences."

"But Christians will be saved because of what Jesus did on the cross," Beth said. "We won't have to worry."

"I'm glad you have that peace, Beth," Whit said.

"Why couldn't we understand the screeches of the giants?" Patrick asked. "When they got angry, the noise hurt my ears. It was like static."

A solemn expression passed over Whit's face. Some of the light went out of his eyes briefly.

"I couldn't translate it either," Whit said. He shook his head in wonder. "Language is a gift from God. It's orderly and rational. But some things are too wicked to be put into words. Somehow, the screeches were evil beyond thought. They couldn't be expressed in a way your minds could understand."

"Just as well," Beth said. "I've heard curse words at school. And I don't want to know what they mean either."

"What happened to the giants?" Patrick asked. He remembered six-fingered Amora, who was one-quarter giant. Then there were the full giants—her two cousins, Anak and Erum. And the other giants and townsfolk who wanted to burn down the ark.

"No one knows for sure," Whit said. "The giant Goliath is mentioned in 1 Samuel 17. He was more than nine feet tall, and another giant man from Goliath's hometown had six fingers. And large, strong men are also mentioned in Numbers 13:32-33."

"Amelia isn't very tall. But she sure was a giant problem," Beth said. She placed Amelia's remote control on a nearby table. "There was another one, but it was washed away in the flood."

Whit studied the remote and flicked the antenna on top. "Let's see what we have here," he said. He opened up the back with a screwdriver.

Patrick saw that the remote had a serial number inscribed inside. “What does that number mean?” he asked.

Whit looked at him over the rims of his glasses. “It means this is number one of five.”

Beth said, “The one in the floodwaters is gone. We have this one. So we need to find three more?”

Whit chuckled. “I suppose now that she knows how, she can always build another one . . . or ten,” he said.

A silence filled the workshop.

Patrick finally said what they were all thinking: “Then she can keep following us on every trip!”

Whit chuckled again. “Not if we turn the tables on her!” he said.

“How?” Patrick asked.

“He means that we’ll be following Amelia on our next trip,” she said.

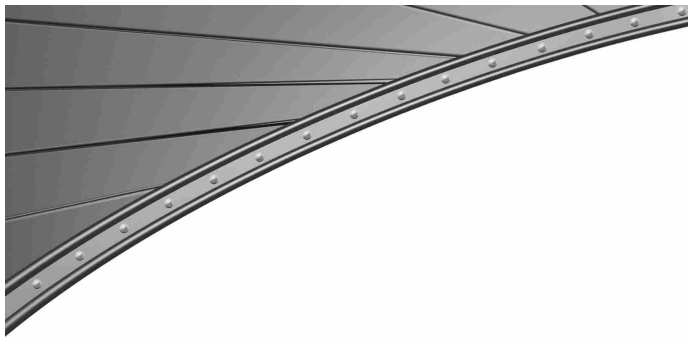
Patrick looked at Whit.

Whit nodded and smiled. “That’s it, exactly.”

“Where are we going?” Patrick asked.

Whit said, “I have no idea. That’s up to Amelia.”

To learn about the next book in this series, Big Risks in Russia, visit TheImaginationStation.com.



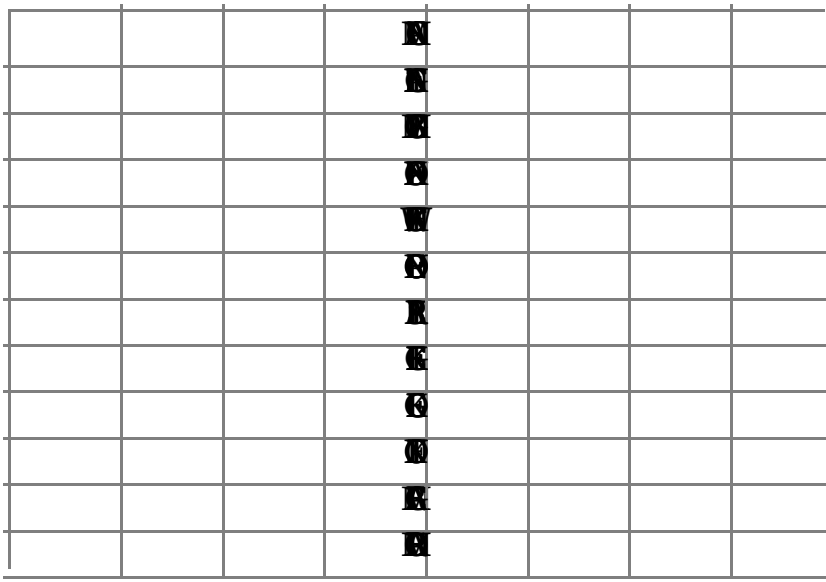
Secret Word Puzzle

Lots of animals boarded Noah's ark. The Bible mentions animals in other places too—more than ninety creatures of land, air, and sea! The puzzle on the following page lists the names of nineteen of those animals. Circle their names in the word grid. Then write the leftover letters in order (from left to right) on the blanks below. Then you'll know the secret word, which is the word used in the Bible for *giant* (Genesis 6:4).

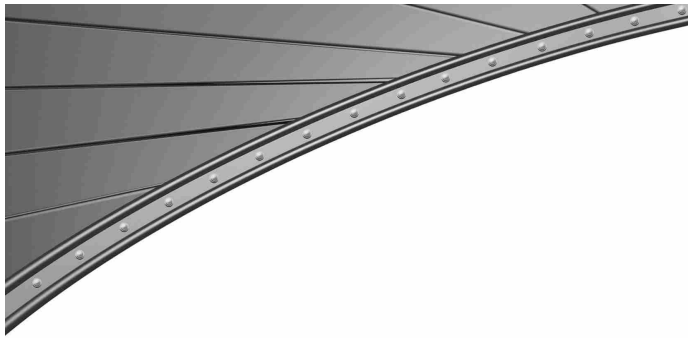
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

1. antelope
2. camel
3. donkey
4. eagle
5. fly
6. fox
7. gazelle
8. gecko
9. gnat
10. horse

11. lamb
12. leopard
13. lion
14. ox
15. pig
16. ram
17. snake
18. stork
19. wolf



Go to TheImaginationStation.com.
Find the cover of this book.
Click on "Secret Word."
Type in the correct answer,
and you'll receive a prize



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1: Voyage with the Vikings

2: Attack at the Arena

3: Peril in the Palace

4: Revenge of the Red Knight

5: Showdown with the Shepherd

6: Problems in Plymouth

7: Secret of the Prince's Tomb

8: Battle for Cannibal Island

9: Escape to the Hiding Place

10: Challenge on the Hill of Fire

11: Hunt for the Devil's Dragon

12: Danger on a Silent Night

13: The Redcoats Are Coming!

14: Captured on the High Seas

15: Surprise at Yorktown

16: Doomsday in Pompeii

17: In Fear of the Spear

18: Trouble on the Orphan Train

19: Light in the Lions' Den

20: Inferno in Tokyo

21: Madman in Manhattan

22: Freedom at the Falls

23: Terror in the Tunnel

24: Rescue on the River

25: Poison at the Pump

26: Swept into the Sea

27: Refugees on the Run

28: Islands and Enemies

29: Sled Run for Survival

30: Land of the Lost

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